GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:306
ANSWERED ON:01.12.2015
GM Crops
Gandhi Dr. Dharam Vira

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is planning to permit Genetically Modified Mustard crop to be cultivated across the country;
(b) if so, the details in this regard and the reasons therefore along with the details of the data and information related to its safety tests; and
(c) the measures being taken by the Government to implement the recommendations of the Supreme Court appointed Technical Committee and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture on any open air release of Genetically Modified Organisms including field trials and cultivation?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) & (b): The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) notified under Rules, 1989 is the apex body to accord approval for large scale use and commercial release of genetically modified organisms. GEAC had approved the application from Centre for the Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants, University of Delhi (CGMCP) for permission to conduct BRL-II trials of transgenic mustard hybrid (DMH-11) containing bar, barnase and barstar genes in three places i.e. Ludhiana, Bhatinda and Delhi. The CGMCP has submitted the application to the GEAC for consideration for commercial release of transgenic mustard. Government of India has a policy of taking a view on GM crop only after full scientific valuation of its biosafety and impact on the environment and on the consumers. Introduction of any new GM crop is preceded by a careful analysis of risks and evaluation of long term benefits for which extensive rules and guidelines framed by the Government for evaluating environmental and health safety impacts of genetically modified organisms.

(c) The Technical Expert Committee (TEC) appointed by Supreme Court has submitted two reports; one report having the concurrence of the 5 Member TEC and the second report submitted by the 6th Member. Both the reports have highlighted certain regulatory gaps and suggestions for improving the Biosafety Regulation in India. Five members of TEC have recommended that the GM crop field trials be put on hold till all recommendations are implemented. Dr. Paroda, the 6th member recommended that the existing safety norms prescribed by the GEAC for conduct of field trials are adequate. The Union of India (UoI) has not accepted the recommendations for imposing moratorium on GM field trials on the grounds that include (i) the current regulations and Protocols followed in biosafety assessment are as per international best practices, (ii) field trials are an integral part of biosafety assessment and trials are necessary to generate biosafety data, (iii) any ban on GM crop field trials would stop all research activities in the country which may have a long term implications on food security issues. The UoI had filed its objection in the Supreme Court through a joint Common Affidavit on 1.4.2014. The UOI is of the view that research in GM and confined field trials for generating biosafety data with all due precautions should be allowed to continue in the national interest. As of date, the Supreme Court has not imposed any ban on GM crop field trials.

The recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture on Cultivation of Genetically Modified Food Crops − Prospects and Effects (37th report) for stopping of all field trials of GM crops were not agreed to and it was informed that it is not advisable to stop the field trials of transgenic crops as this would deny access of Indian farmers to such technology and since the biosafety regulatory mechanism for GM crops in India is of global standards.
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